51. Tank Restoration Scheme.

MR. S. K. SUBRAHMANYA AIYAR (*Member, Shencottah taluk*) stated that the Shencottah taluk resembled the Tinnevelly District in its physical features and general conditions. It might be considered to be divided into two sections, the eastern and western. The eastern section comprised portions of the valleys of the Hanumannadi and Karuppannadi. There were 41 irrigation works in the Hanumannadi basin of which 38 belonged to the Government and the remaining 3 tanks to the villagers of Godavarmapuram Street and Ayikudi. The two rivers referred to above were more or less completely dried up except during the monsoon seasons. The western section was hilly, comprising the valleys of the Kundar and Hariharanadi which were fed by a number of tributaries. There were 187 irrigation works in the western section of which 2 were major channels and the remaining minor and petty tanks and *kals*.

When the Maramath Department was re-organised in 1906, the irrigation works in the Shencottah taluk were handed over to the Public Works Department and the establishment was also placed under its control. In 1911, rules under the Irrigation Regulation were passed and under those rules a division of control over the irrigation works was effected, the minor works being entrusted to the Tahsildar and the major works to the Public Works Department. About the time the Irrigation Regulation was passed, it was found that the irrigation tanks in the taluk were in a neglected condition and the necessity for restoring them was keenly felt. A committee was accordingly appointed to draft a scheme for the restoration of the tanks and the committee drafted the Tank Restoration Scheme and the Public Works Department was entrusted with the work of restoring the tanks. The Public Works Department took up the works mentioned in the scheme one by one but the works had not yet been completed for the following reasons :—

(1) The several tanks and *kals* in each locality were classified into groups and the work was attended to only group by group. The other groups were in the meantime left unattended to.

(2) Out of the estimated cost for each group, only a portion was allotted every year and therefore the works could not be completed soon. Out of the 22 groups in the taluk, only 11 had been completed and work in respect of 3 others was alone in progress. A sum of Rs. 26,667 had been spent so far on those three, out of the estimated cost of Rs. 58,777. As regards the remaining 8 groups *viz.*, (i) the Necliamman *kal aar*, (ii) the Sri Mulaperi tank, (iii) the Klangad *Tekku-kal* and *Vadakku-kal*, (iv) the Tamarakulam group, (v) the Aryamartandaperi group, (vi) the Kattiyatukulam group, (vii) the Navalkattukulam group and (viii) the Martandan group, the work in respect of the Sri Mulaperi tank was very urgent. But, for the full allotment of the total estimated cost of Rs. 72,544, it would take at least seven years at the rate at which budget provisions were being made annually. Besides, the estimate itself was made so long ago as 1086; with the increase in the cost of labour and materials, the estimated amount had become insufficient. By the time the whole amount was spent on the tanks, it was to be feared that they would revert to their original condition of disrepair.

(3) The Irrigation officer was not well up with the local conditions of the taluk and therefore was not able to use his discretion correctly in selecting the works in the order of urgency when more than one work had to be carried out and the funds available were not adequate for the whole.

(4) The Tank Restoration Scheme contained proposals which were against *mamool* or established customs; and when any work was taken up serious disputes, which could not be easily decided, arose. As instances in point, the member quoted the works done in connection with the Vembadi Anicut at Puliyara and the *Tenkal* irrigating the Pukuzhi *nanja* lands.

Much confusion was caused by the dual control created by the Irrigation Rules. Under those rules, the Tahsildar was authorised to recover amounts due from the ryots, to look after the distribution of water and to inspect the minor and petty irrigation works, while the Public Works Department Sub-Division Officer was authorised to construct and repair the works and inspect the same. In respect of major works, the Public Works Department was entrusted with all powers under the Irrigation Regulation and Rules. But the Government had, in their order No. 6757/L. R. & F.,

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dated the 22nd June, 1913, authorised that department to retain the minor irrigation works also till the Tank Restoration Scheme was finished. On the strength of the above, the Tahsildar was acting as if the minor irrigation works were not handed over to him, while the P. W. D. officers were under the impression that the Irrigation Regulation did not confer on them the power of distributing water from the minor and petty irrigation tanks. Such duality of control was a source of hardship to the owners of adjoining lands.

In order to remove the defects and difficulties pointed out, an Irrigation Board including the Tahsildar, the S. M. P. A. member for the year and 8 elected members returned by all the *pakuthies* except Mekkara, where there was not much of irrigation, should be constituted. Sufficient funds should be placed at the disposal of the board which should be entrusted with the following duties :—

(1) To settle irrigation disputes arising as a result of their being opposed to *mamool* or on account of interfering with the rights of the adjacent British Indian agriculturists.

(2) To revise the present estimated amount with reference to each work, to fix the order of urgency and cause each work to be carried out.

(3) To advise in the matter of the distribution of water.

(4) To deepen and properly maintain the tanks and collect the ryots' share of the cost of maintenance.

DEWAN'S REPLY : Mr. Subrahmanya Aiyar, allow me to congratulate you on the careful study you seem to have given to your subject, the lucid manner in which you have presented the facts of the case and the useful and constructive proposals you have placed before the Government.

MEMBER : Thank you, Sir.

DEWAN : Let me tell you that it was a great pleasure to me to listen to a well-thought-out representation such as yours and it makes the Government's task much easier.

The Government recognise that the position of Shencottah is unique in Travancore and that the conditions there in many ways call for a different treatment as they are different from those prevailing in other parts of the State. Your suggestions that the people of the place should be associated in the selection, and in the manner of application of funds to the restoration of tanks appears to me to be a good one and I shall take early measures to have it considered and see whether we can do anything to give effect to it. It stands to reason that, if the funds allotted are spent in patch work or in undirected efforts or badly selected works, there must necessarily be waste of money. If properly co-ordinated and if the officers of Government can be helped by the people of the place, with their knowledge of the local conditions and requirements I think it will tend in every way towards obtaining better results.

MEMBER : Thank you, Sir.

52. Agricultural needs of the Changanachery taluk, Group I.

MR. NAINAN SOURIYAR (*Member, Changanachery taluk, Group I*) said that it was deplorable that Travancore could not produce a sufficient quantity of food-stuffs to meet the demands of her people. Although an extent of 7,00,000 acres of land was under paddy cultivation in the State, the quanity of paddy produced was not sufficient and more than 2 crores of rupees worth of rice and paddy had annually to be imported from outside. Cocoanut plantations were not thriving because of a pest prevailing in Kuttanad and other places. In order to minimise the need for importing such large quantities of rice and paddy, it was necessary to adopt measures for increasing the output of paddy in the State.

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